



Need More Information About the Sacramento Area Voltage Support EIS?

◆ **Toll-Free hotline:** 1-877-913-4440

◆ **Visit the website:** www.wapa.gov

◆ **Visit the public reading rooms:**

*Yuba County Library, 303 2nd Street, Marysville, CA
(503) 741-6241*

*Lodi Library, 201 W. Locust Street, Lodi, CA
(209) 333-8507*

*Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region
114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, CA
(916) 353-4416*

◆ **E-mail us at:**

*mcmahon@wapa.gov
Please include: "SVS Comments" in the subject line*

◆ **Mail us at:**

*Loreen McMahon
Environmental Project Manager
Western Area Power Administration
Sierra Nevada Region
114 Parkshore Drive
Folsom, CA 95630-4710*

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Sierra Nevada Region
114 Parkshore Drive
Folsom, CA 95630-4710**



Sacramento Area Voltage Support EIS News

A periodic publication of Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region—Issue 1, March 2001

The Project Manager's Corner

I am excited to introduce our first in a series of newsletters designed to keep you informed about the Sacramento Area Voltage Support Environmental Impact Statement (SVS EIS) being developed by the Western Area Power Administration's (Western's) Sierra Nevada Region Office. To the right you will see a listing of the articles in this newsletter.

Periodically, we plan to feature a lead article. The article will focus on a particular topic directly affecting the development of the SVS EIS. This newsletter's feature article (beginning on page 2) summarizes the comments received during the Public Scoping Period held from August 8 through October 2, 2000.

With this inaugural newsletter, we are introducing another way to keep in touch with you. The "Answer Box" is introduced on page 3 and I invite all of you to send us questions or comments you might have on the SVS EIS. The purpose of this regular feature in the newsletter is to help us address your concerns, whether they have to do with the process, environmental analysis, or something else related to the SVS EIS. It is possible that some questions might not appear in this newsletter due to space limitations.

I believe that public involvement is a vital part of our NEPA process and I hope that you will continue to participate in this project. In the next issue we plan on updating you on our proposed schedule and will continue to identify specific opportunities for your involvement in this process.

Thank you for your interest in the project. Please let us know if you have any suggestions on how we can make this newsletter more useful to you.

Cordially,

Loreen McMahon
Environmental Project Manager
Sacramento Area Voltage Support EIS
Western Area Power Administration
Sierra Nevada Region

SVS EIS Public Workshop

Western invites you to attend a workshop on the Sacramento Area Voltage Support EIS, to be held March 22, 2001, in Western's office at 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, California. The workshop will take place from 1–3 p.m. We will discuss the progress of the EIS to date, review comments received from the public during the public scoping process, and provide information on some of the potential alternatives that Western is evaluating. The public is invited to comment on the information presented and participate in the discussions related to these issues. If you are unable to attend the workshop, but would like to obtain information or provide comments, please contact us (see back of newsletter for ways to contact us).



Public involvement is an important and integral part of Western's NEPA process. The public involvement process provides a means of identifying the concerns, needs, and values of interested parties and is a very important part of the process for Western. Public ideas and comments assist in the development of the EIS and we openly encourages all interested parties to participate. In the coming months, Western will hold additional public meetings to inform the general public, stakeholders, and others about the progress of the SVS EIS. Future newsletters will provide the information that you need to attend these meetings, progress on the development of project alternatives and how you can provide informal and formal comments during the EIS process.

PUBLIC MEETING March 22, 2001, 1-3 pm

Western Area Power Administration
Sierra Nevada Region

114 Parkshore Drive
Folsom, California

Call our toll-free number 1-877-913-4440 for further information. We hope you can join us!

*Call toll-free: 1-877-913-4440 for more information
about the SVS EIS, or visit us at: www.wapa.gov*



Public Scoping Period/What is an EIS?

What were the issues raised to Western during the public scoping period?

Western published a Notice of Intent (NOI) on Aug. 8, 2000 in the Federal Register (a publication that reports government announcements) to prepare the SVS EIS. The notice described Western's mission and the current power situation in the Sacramento area. The notice also listed issues to be considered in the analysis.

Interested individuals and organizations were invited to submit comments on the scope of the SVS EIS during a scoping period that ran from Aug. 8 to Oct. 2, 2000, to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Comments were submitted in writing or recorded at the public scoping meetings. Four public scoping meetings were held: Sept. 12 in Lodi; Sept. 20 in Folsom (1 p.m. and 7 p.m.); and Sept. 21 in Marysville.

Western requested comments from the public to better tailor the contents of the SVS EIS. The concerns of the public are taken into account when planning the extent of the analysis and discussion of individual topics. Sometimes, new topics are added to an EIS as a result of expressed public concerns. Summary of the scoping period comments can be found on Western's website at www.wapa.gov. Issues identified in the comments were organized into 12 broad categories. The entire scoping summary follows:

Affected Environment—Request the SVS EIS document existing conditions, explaining the changes which have occurred (for instance, history of power generation and transmission and past impacts). Such an assessment is important in providing the historical and environmental context for current conditions and possible solutions for future voltage requirements for the Central Valley Project transmission system.

Air Quality—Request the SVS EIS address air quality. The SVS EIS include a description of current and proposed activities and their impacts on air quality (including cumulative and indirect impacts); demonstrate compliance with conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act; examine the effects of increased reliance on fossil fuels during periods of reduced hydroelectric power generation (as could occur during droughts); and address the effect on energy and commercial projects in the area if powerplants have bought available emission credits.

Alternatives—Evaluate a broad mix of alternatives, describing how each alternative was developed. Evaluate both generation and transmission. Alternatives should not adversely affect reliability. Alternatives should not affect autonomy. Consider near-term transmission solutions. Specific alternatives suggested include: demand-side management, distributed generation, potential upgrades to the existing transmission system, integration of the transmission grid in the greater Sacramento area, flexible AC transmission system design options, smarter use of electricity, obtaining power from outside California, new technologies, and use of backup emergency power during stage alerts. There were also numerous questions about whether Western already had specific projects in mind.

Biological Resources—The SVS EIS should indicate what measures will be taken to protect critical fish and wildlife habitat areas from potential adverse effects of proposed management actions, and fully disclose potential beneficial and/or adverse impacts to water quality, wetlands and aquatic ecosystems. Also, the SVS EIS should fully evaluate proposed alternatives in the context of the potential for habitat restoration, habitat fragmentation, loss of connectivity and the cumulative effects on species viability. The SVS EIS should consider the Endangered Species Act when examining the impacts of potential projects.

Cultural Resources—Request the analysis reflect concerns for cultural resources.

Document Preparation/Format—If the SVS EIS uses references to previous documents, it should provide a summary of critical issues, assumptions and decisions complete enough to stand alone without depending upon continued reference to the other documents. The SVS EIS should also include a section on potential effects on local, State and Federal ordinances, regulations, legislation, and laws.

Environmental Justice—The SVS EIS should describe the measures taken by Western to fully analyze the environmental effects of the proposed Federal action on minority communities, e.g. Indian Tribes and low-income populations, and present opportunities for affected communities to provide input into the NEPA process.

Human Health—Electrical system improvements should ensure human health and safety.

Methodologies—Suggestions on how the analysis of SVS EIS alternatives should be conducted included: focusing on an evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives in comparative form, thus defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options for the decision maker and the public; describing the management constraints on the Federal projects which generate the power (for instance, flood control requirements, water supply contracts and diversion obligations, Endangered Species Act water flow requirements and water quality standards requirements); full disclosure of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of all proposed actions; establishing a clear baseline to evaluate potential impacts; and determining compliance with the Federal Antidegradation Policy.

Public Involvement—The SVS EIS should include a separate section describing specific actions and techniques that were used to ensure public participation and interagency collaboration and coordination.

Socioeconomics—Lodi does not want financial impacts due to reliability; how will Western collect revenues necessary to recover the cost of project; and what actions can Western take to prevent rate increases.

Surface Water—The SVS EIS should describe the potential impacts of any proposed actions on the operations of Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, and International Boundary and Water Commission facilities (the primary project purpose for many of these facilities is water supply,

flood control, and instream beneficial uses); address the potential implications of the proposed power and transmission actions on water supply, flood protection, and endangered species actions related to dams. Discuss specific monitoring programs that will be implemented before and after proposed management actions to determine potential impacts on water quality and beneficial uses. Identify impacts to water, flood plains and wetlands. The proposed action should not violate state water quality standards, toxic effluent standards or cause significant degradation of waters.

The Answer Box

This space has been reserved for you! Do you have questions or comments about the SVS EIS and don't know how to get them addressed? Then this space is for you! We will answer questions or comments posed about the SVS EIS.

Send us your questions or comments including your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

See page 4 on how to contact us by mail, telephone, e-mail, or through the website.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The Reason for the SVS EIS

The greater Sacramento area, like other major metropolitan areas through the West, is experiencing rapid growth in industry and population. This growth continues to increase the power demand on the area's interconnected transmission system. Because the system is overloaded, improvements are needed to maintain reliability and security of the power system.

The electric utility industry at the same time is undergoing major changes as it transitions to a de-regulated environment. One consequence of the uncertainty related to this transition has been the lack of new power plant and transmission line construction to match the significant growth load in recent years. This has resulted in serious concerns about power system reliability by utility operators charged with maintaining the power system. This concern became fully apparent in January and February of this year with the California Independent System Operator (California ISO) declaring 24 consecutive days of Stage Three Electrical Emergency, with operating reserves remaining at or near 1.5%.

Western was established in 1977, as a part of the Department of Energy. The Sierra Nevada Region, encompassing most of California and Nevada, markets approximately 1500 megawatts of firm power to its customers. Sources for this power include the Central Valley Project's 11 hydroelectric powerplants, contracts with Northwest suppliers and the Washoe project powerplant at Stampede Reservoir.

Based on Western's role to operate and maintain the federal power transmission system, Western began the EIS process with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on Aug 8, 2000. Western proposes to prepare an EIS to address potential actions that can be taken by Western concerning the future voltage requirements of the Sacramento area. The EIS will describe the projected near-term voltage support requirements for an approximately 100-mile radius around Sacramento, potential upgrades to the existing transmission system, and the potential for new transmission lines to alleviate the current shortfall in electrical services. The No Action Alternative will also be examined in this EIS.